

Copyright Technical Working Group
Announces DVD Encryption Achievement

The multi-industry Copyright Protection Technical Working Group "CPTWG") today announced that its subcommittee on Digital Video Disc ("DVD") technology had reached tentative agreement on an encryption-based system for controlling access to digital motion picture material published on disc in the DVD-video format. It also has defined techniques for implementing certain copy control measures for audiovisual material originating in the DVD-video format. Work of other CPTWG subcommittees, and of a parallel committee addressed to policy and legislative recommendations, is ongoing.

The CPTWG and its policy counterpart were formed in April of this year, after representatives of the motion picture and consumer electronics industries had announced joint plans to ask the Congress for legislation on the subject of digital copying of audiovisual material. Representatives of the computer and recording industries had expressed concern over both legislative and technical aspects of the joint recommendation. Consultations resulted in the formation of the parallel policy and technical subcommittees. A June 21 report of the technical committee, now known as the CPTWG, led to the formation of a number of subcommittees addressed to specific technological areas and issues.

Today Alan Bell, of I.B.M., one of the CPTWG co-chairs, said:

We are pleased that a means has been found to allow audiovisual program material on DVD to be transmitted by a means of encryption that is secure yet transparent to the consumer. This will allow makers of devices who do not wish to support DVD audiovisual applications to simply ignore the signal. Those manufacturers who wish to support such applications will, by procuring a license on nominal terms, be able to make devices that provide access to works on encrypted DVD-video discs and will then also be obliged to provide support in such devices for certain copyright-related technical measures.

Bell noted that the CPTWG and the Joint Policy Committee intend to work toward recommending legislation to the 105th Congress that would prohibit the circumvention of certain copy control technologies. Such legislation would also provide assurances for consumers wishing to engage in certain recording practices that are viewed as reasonable and customary with respect to video and audio home entertainment. He said that efforts will continue on the subject of such legislation in parallel to the ongoing technical work.

Bell said that while the encryption-based system is still undergoing final evaluation by various parties, the DVD subcommittee has concluded provisionally that it meets the goals and criteria established for it with respect to motion picture content. The subcommittee recognizes that continued improvement may be made in this particular system and that alternative or complementary encryption-based technologies or systems may be developed and adopted in the marketplace.

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Bell noted that the CPTWG itself will not be involved in implementation and licensing of the encryption-based system. However, work is well under way to establish an independent entity to assume such responsibilities and institute a non-discriminatory, nominal cost-based licensing regime. Developers of the encryption-based system may assume these responsibilities on an interim basis.

The other subcommittees of the CPTWG will continue to meet on a regular basis to continue to develop additional copy control techniques. With respect to DVD devices, these will include design of complementary systems for (i) audio works published on DVD, and (ii) control of digital copying from digital outputs, and of copying from analog "RGB" outputs. (Measures for application of copy control techniques to composite "NTSC" analog outputs have already been defined.)

With respect to other products, as well as DVD, subjects of ongoing CPTWG subcommittee work will include design of copy control systems for the encoding, transmission, recording and display of works, so as to make available copy control measures potentially applicable to digital-to-digital, digital-to-analog, and analog-to-digital transmissions.

The other co-chairs of the CPTWG are Chris Cookson of Warner Brothers Pictures; William Connolly, a consultant to Sony Corp.; Bob Lambert of The Walt Disney Co.; and David Stebbings of the Recording Industry Association of America.

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